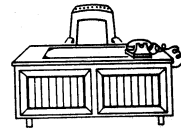


Palm Sunday

April 14, 2019



From the Desk of
Fr. Romanus

Dear Parishioners,

Palm Sunday Reflection:

This weekend, we join Catholic and Christian communities all over the world in celebrating Palm Sunday. It recalls the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem where the events of the Paschal Mystery would unfold in rapid succession. Before entering Jerusalem, Jesus spent some time in Bethany visiting with friends, doing last minute miracles, and teaching the people. In Jerusalem, we will see the fulfillment of the prophecies about “the suffering servant” in Jesus’ experience of the paschal mystery.

Knowing what Jesus knew about his fate in Jerusalem, many of us would have dreaded going there. As a man on a mission, Jesus was undeterred by the challenges and adversities that lay ahead. With renewed anticipation, albeit trepidation, we are invited to accompany Jesus on this triumphant entry into Jerusalem.

Palm Sunday is one of those monumental events in Jesus’ life recorded by all four canonical gospels (Mark 11:1-10; Matthew 21:1-11; Luke 19:28-40; and John 12:12-16). We proclaim one of these gospels at the beginning of the entrance procession, separate from the passion narrative. This year’s passion narrative from Luke’s gospel sets the tone for Holy Week and the Triduum. The narrative invites a deeper appreciation of God’s unconditional love revealed in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Before the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council, the celebration of Passion Sunday was on the fifth Sunday of Lent. The Sunday that followed was designated the Second Sunday of the Passion. Now, we celebrate Palm Sunday on the Sunday following the Fifth Sunday of Lent. We got rid of the Second Sunday of the Passion.

In this Sunday’s entrance gospel, Jesus sends two of his disciples to fetch the colt he would ride on for the big entry into Jerusalem. Jesus is fully in control of the events, with no room for negotiation, not even with the colt’s owner. All that the colt owner needed to know was that the Master has need of it. One may wonder why Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt/donkey rather than a horse. Well, in ancient times, colts or donkeys were peaceful animals, while horses were associated with wars and battles. Certainly, those who were expecting a political messiah would have preferred Jesus charging into Jerusalem on a white horse like a conquering emperor.

The crowd’s response to Jesus’ triumphant entry was deafening as they underscored the acceptance of Jesus’ Messianic identity. Luke tells us that the people spread their cloaks on the road as a sign of honor and admiration. John’s gospel is the only gospel that mentions ‘palm fronds’ while Matthew and Mark speak of ‘leafy branches.’ That detail is important for John since the palm branch is a special symbol of triumph and victory in Jewish tradition. The enthusiastic crowd welcomed Jesus as King, proclaiming in unison, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” Interesting to note that Luke’s version does not include the word, ‘Hosanna.’

The irony of Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem is not lost on us. Some in this jubilant crowd would be among those screaming for his crucifixion in the passion narrative. With friends like these, who needs an enemy? I guess the lesson is that those who put their faith in humans rather than in God are bound to be disappointed.

Wishing you a blessed Holy Week!

Fr. Romanus